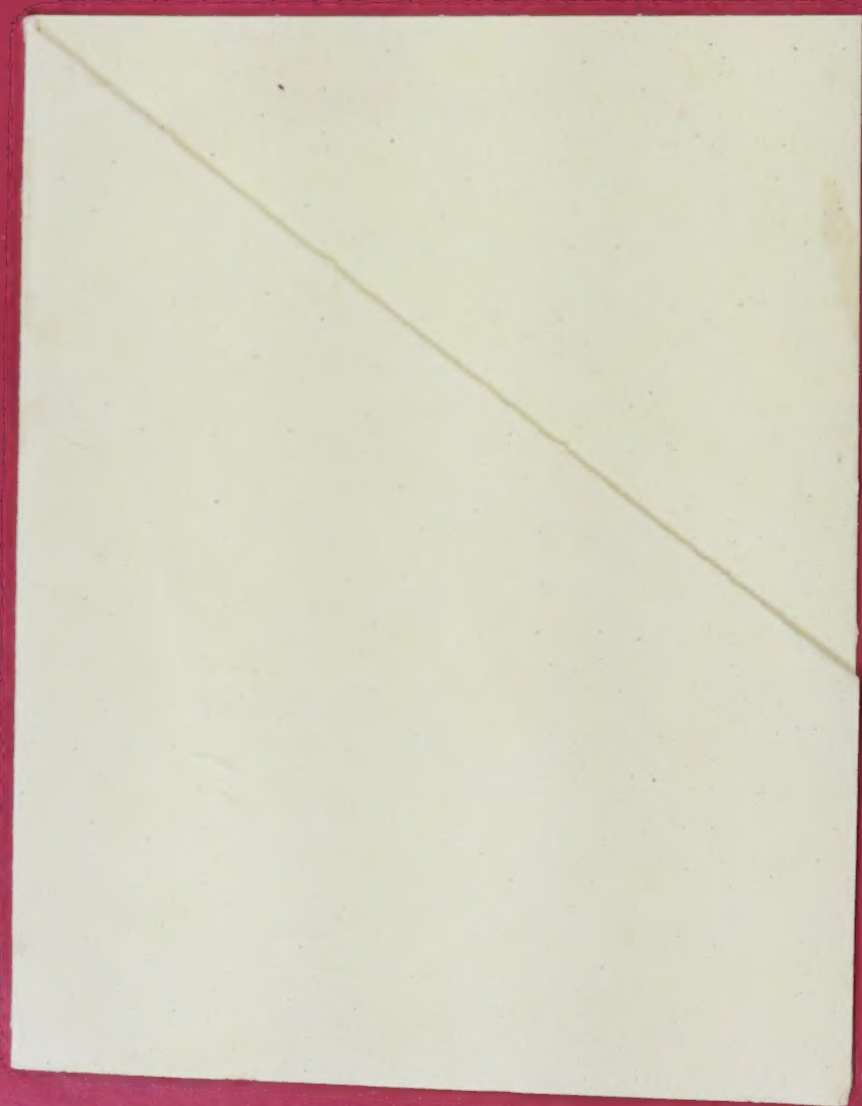




1452





# A SERVICE DOCUMENT ON The theme of the 1977 Synod of Bishops “CATECHETICS IN OUR TIME”

*Prepared by the IV All-India Catechetical Meeting  
National Catechetical Centre (NBCLC), Bangalore, India,  
6—10 December 1976.*

(This document was prepared and passed unanimously by the 140 participants of the IV All-India Catechetical Meeting, held at the National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC), Bangalore from the 5th to the 10th December 1976. The participants included Catechetical leaders at all levels: Bishop members, secretary and consultors of the CBCI Commission for Catechetics, Bishop representatives of Regional Councils, regional and diocesan directors of Catechetics, heads of Catechists' Training Schools and professors of Major Seminaries and Scholasticates, and other institutes of formation and a representative group of brothers, sisters and lay people.

The Consultation took place in 3 stages spread over 6 full days. This meeting was eventful and specially significant as it took place between the diocesan-regional-level study of the Synodal theme and the General Meeting of the CBCI. Thus it took into account both, though it had an overall perspective and studied the theme as a group of competent and experienced people. It was very representative.

This service document is offered in humble homage to the Bishops of India, and as a source of inspiration and stimulus to the whole Church in India, especially to all those who are committed to Catechetical Ministry.)

## INTRODUCTION

1. As ministers of God's Word to India we are grateful for the advent of Synod 1977 with its theme: *Catechetics in our Time*. We read this coming event as a sign of invitation from the Risen Lord Jesus Himself. We hear Him beckoning us to continue and to deepen both the pastoral reflection and the pastoral service which was inspired by the experience of the 1974 Synod on Evangelisation. We hear Him now calling us to a new interior renewal: "Repent, and believe the Good News" (Mk. I:15). To be an evangelised and evangelising community: This is, indeed, as Christ's Vicar reminds us, our deepest identity. ("*Evangelii Nuntiandi*", Nos. 13-14). It is the reason for which we live. And so we are glad for the invitation to become what we are called and sent to be.

2. As a community of Christ's servants and pastors, we hear Him say to us more insistently than ever: "Look after my sheep" (Jn. 21:17). Again and again we meditate upon His compassion for the crowds, "harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd". (Mt. 9:36). From this meditation, we realize anew that our pastoral reflection in preparation for this Synod must first be upon the India of our generation: the poor, the blind, the lame and the downtrodden, for whose liberation Jesus came. We see them before our eyes, every day, by the million. Within this land, so rich and so poor, with all its mysteries; within these complex realities, we strive "to decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose". (Const. on "*The Church in the Modern World*", No. 11).

*Basic Terms:*

3. First of all, let us clarify what we mean by "Catechetics" It is the science and art of transmitting God's message to a group of believers in order to foster a more mature personal faith and witness.



“Catechesis” is the actual transmission of the message and the on-going process of faith-nurturing. More definitely, by “Catechesis” we mean the prophetic ministry of the Christian Community by which a group of Christians are enabled to discern, under the guidance of the Spirit, God’s saving presence within its life-situation and environment. These Christians are enabled to interpret the meaning of their lives and their orientation for the future in the light of God’s Word (the Sacred Scriptures, the history of the Church, its present life-witness, Worship, and the official teaching of the Magisterium). Thereby the community, acknowledging Jesus as the revelation of man to man, and the revelation of the Father, surrenders itself to him in faith. Thus it is in Christ and through his Spirit, that the community realizes deep communion with God and with its fellowmen. This communion brings about the self-renewal of the faith-community and through it comes the transformation of society.

4. Therefore, no catechesis, at any level, will be effective, unless it is situated within a community that provides a proper soil, furnishing the right nourishment for faith, witness of the faith, and a formal initiation into the faith. In some parts of the Catechetical World, this “*Total Catechesis*” has been referred to by the term “Adult Catechesis”. However, in this document “Adult Catechesis” will mean catechesis for adults.

5. While we reflect prayerfully on our Christian Community in India, our attention is drawn to five areas of pastoral concern:—

- I. The first area of concern is ADULTS who have been until today, largely neglected. A fact that has grown clear within the past few decades is that Adult Catechesis is the chief form of Catechesis. As the “*General Catechetical Directory*” says: “They (the pastors) should also remember that catechesis for adults, since it deals with persons who are capable of an adherence that is fully responsible, must be considered the chief

form of catechesis. All other forms which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it". (G.C.D. No. 20). Adults not only perform the most responsible work in the Church and Society but it is they who carry the heaviest burdens and are subject to increasing pressures from secularism. This entails a radical change of priorities.

- II. The second area of concern is the *CATHOLIC YOUTH* of India, the hope of tomorrow.
- III. The third area of concern is the *CONTENT OF CATECHESIS*: the full proclamation of the Paschal-Good News.
- IV. The fourth area of concern is the *CONTEXT OF OUR CATECHESIS*, viz. the Socio-economic and Cultural-religious dimension of India.
- V. The fifth area of concern is the *FORMATION OR TRAINING OF CATECHISTS*—be they bishops, clergy, religious or laity, so that they may be truly christian prophets, faithful to Christ's Spirit, to his church, and to the urgent needs and aspirations of India.



## PART I: THE CATECHESIS OF ADULTS

6. The aim of Adult Catechesis is to deepen the personal faith-commitment of the Christian adult by enabling him to become fully aware of his vocation and mission: to bear witness to the Paschal Mystery of Christ within his life-situation in the light of the Gospel.

7. The mature Christian believer lives out his vocation proper to him by sharing his Christian vision of reality and by giving a Christian meaning to life-situations and events in the light of the Gospel. He offers thereby a Christian inspiration, motivation and orientation through his committed action.

Thereby he will bear witness to Christ, risen from the dead and become Lord of the Universe, by aiming at the renewal of man and society, and working for the kingdom of God—the final fulfilment of human history.

### *Different levels of Adult Catechesis:*

8. Adult Catechesis is carried out by various agencies and at different levels:—

- a) at the parish level;
- b) at the family level;
- c) at the institutional level;
- d) at the group level (homogeneous groups and heterogeneous groups).

a) **At the Parish Level;** Adult Catechesis is imparted through properly celebrated liturgy, the homily and the sacraments. In the preparation for fruitful reception of the sacraments, the role of an adequate catechesis cannot be sufficiently emphasized. It ranges from the Sacraments of Initiation, when parents bring their infants for Baptism or receive Communion together with their little ones who are making their First Holy Communion, and it proceeds through the whole gamut of daily life into pre-Marriage catechesis, and so on.

9. Other forms of liturgical Catechesis present the various aspects of the Christ-mystery as it is spelled out throughout the Liturgical Year, from season to season and from feast to feast, revealing the richness of the Message and the different facets of the Christ-mystery in all its infinite variety. Adults are reached largely through the liturgy.

Sunday homilies properly prepared and delivered, play an essential part in helping the adult grow in faith and witness.

10. Moreover, various forms of "popular piety", such as devotions, novena services, feasts, tridiums, missions, etc., can be made use of to communicate a well-planned and organized adult catechesis.

### **The Adult Catechumenate:**

11. In mission areas particularly, the quality of the adult catechumenate determines the faith of the community. The Catechumenate is not a mere expounding of doctrines and precepts. It is a training period for the whole Christian life. It is an apprenticeship of appropriate length, during which disciples are joined to Christ their Teacher. Therefore, catechumens are properly instructed in the mystery of salvation and in the practice of Gospel morality. By sacred rites which are to be held at successive intervals, they are introduced into the life of faith, liturgy, and love, which God's people live. The critical work of this apostolate is to foster an authentic conversion of heart and personal faith-commitment to Christ and the Church.

12. "This Christian initiation through the catechumenate is taken care of not only by the catechists or priests, but by the entire community of the faithful, especially by the sponsors. Thus, right from the outset, the catechumens feel that they belong to the People of God. Since the life of the Church is an apostolic one, the catechumens also learn to cooperate actively, by the witness of their lives and by the profession of their faith, in the spread of the Gospel and in the upbuilding of the Church". (*"Ordo Baptismi Adultorum"*, No. 14).



It is within the parish setting that the adult continues to nurture his faith during missions and retreats, through various ministries in the Christian community, whether they have been carried out in neighbourhood groups or in the wider human community, or in the interactions of the socio-economic and cultural reality of the parish.

**b) At the Family Level:**

13. The family has been called by Vatican II the "domestic Church." It is here that effective catechesis (informal, of course) can be fostered between husband and wife, parents and children, the family and other families. Vatican II dwells very strongly on the importance of the family faith: "the apostolate of married persons and families is of unique importance for the Church and civil society." "At all times and places but particularly in areas where the first seeds of the Gospel are being sown, or where the Church is just beginning, or is involved in some serious difficulty, Christian families can give effective testimony to Christ before the world, by remaining faithful to the Gospel and by providing a model christian marriage through their whole way of life." "The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates". "In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelise and are evangelised. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them."

**c) At the Institutional Level:**

14. Through all her institutions, be they educational, health, social, religious or cultural, etc., the Church fulfils her role as Catechist of the adults. Institutional programmes such as the "Natural Family Planning" Programme, Family Welfare centres, Vocational bureaus, co-operative societies, and the like, can make a valid contribution to the continuous catechesis offered to adults at this level, provided there is someone to give not just professional knowledge but the faith-dimension as well. This is particularly true regarding the present interest in the "Responsible parenthood" pro-

grammes of N.F.P. The Church personnel who impart this training to Catholics, can and should highlight the Christian family ideals.

d) **At the Group Level:**

15. Much of the activities of adults are performed in groups. In adult Catechesis, the importance of the group is becoming clearer and clearer. The group must be considered today a requisite for catechesis which aims at fostering a sense of Christian responsibility ("*Gen. Cat. Directory*", No. 76). The group experience is already a Church community experience in miniature.

Natural group tendencies can be used effectively in catechesis. Thus for instance homogeneous professional and trade groups—doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers, carpenters, mechanics, etc.—are ideal for a new dimension in group-catechesis. Moreover existing groups of Parish associations, (e.g. the Catholic Sabha, the Sodality, the Legion of Mary, the St. Vincet de Paul Society, etc.) also afford opportunities for effective group catechesis.

Mention must here be made of heterogeneous groups, such as "neighbourhood groups" in parishes and mission stations. In some places Mass is celebrated in the neighbourhood with all the neighbours attending and a good opportunity for environmental catechesis is made available.

16. In order to complete this picture, special mention must here be made of *occasional catechesis* and its role in the continuous, on-going catechetical process, both within the family and in the parish.

Parents who are naturally good educators are quick to seize every opportunity to form their children, basing their occasional catechesis on the occurrences of every day life. So too do other skilful educators who seize every opportunity to bring out the moral points in life-situations and, in fact, impart a thorough value-catechesis through daily events.



For, there are certain times, when, according to the need of the hour, the Christian Adult must be guided into seeing things with the eyes of faith and bringing out the Gospel in his life. Occasions such as natural disasters, accidents, extraordinary events, etc.—all these can be made the subject of a serious reflection and a re-orientation of values. Through such events and occurrences, the adult is led to discover God's plan and see everything in the light of faith.

17. "Special concern should be shown for those among the faithful who, on account of their way of life, cannot sufficiently make use of the common and ordinary pastoral case of parish priests or are quite cut off from it. Among this group are the majority of migrants..." (Vat. II, "*Decree on Bishops*", No. 18).

18. Finally an Adult Catechesis must also have an *Ecumenical aspect*. As the Council points out, "Promoting the restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the chief concerns of Vatican II. "Concern for restoring unity pertains to the whole Church, faithful, and clergy alike." (Vat II, "*Decree on Ecumenism*," No. 1).

Another principle of Ecumenism is: What Christians can do together let them not do separately. In India the ecumenical movement has a special importance for giving witness by common Christian concern and commitment to development. Positive ecumenical attitudes must be fostered in adult catechesis.

## PART II: CATECHESIS FOR YOUTH

19. Any generalising on All-India level is not without risk and sometimes impossible. This is true when we deal with the topic of Indian Youth Today. Still, when we reflect in the spirit of the Synod's invitation to a pastoral examination of conscience, some basic questions arise like:—"Who are our youth and what are they seeking?" "How do adults love them?" "How can we be more effective in helping them?" To these questions a few points of general agreement emerge.

**"Who are our Youth and what are they Seeking?"**

20. "Our Youth is searching and, at times, discouraged, confused and questioning. Our youth thirsts for true freedom: a total, spiritual liberation from all the bonds that hold them back. They are looking for witnesses, rather than for teachers-in word only. As Pope Paul VI reminds us: "It is often said nowadays that the present century thirsts for authenticity. Especially with regard to young people, it is said that they have a horror for the artificial or false and that they are searching above all for truth and honesty." (*"Evangelii Nuntiandi"*, Nos. 41 & 76). Another characteristic of youth today, more than yesterday, is how articulate youth is, when it discovers injustice and untruth. Their expression may not always be the best, and sometimes exaggerated, but there may be within this demonstration a prophetic call. Youth has energy and power. Youth is also generous and is eager to be involved and to shoulder responsibility in the adult world. As they become more conscious of their own personalities and of the world around them, they yearn to play their part and to be identified with a just and noble cause. These features are true both in our cities and in our villages.

**"How do Adults Love Them?"**

21. For the adult Christians community there is only one form, in our cities and villages: Jesus and His command: "Love one another just as I have loved you. By



this love you have for one another everyone will know that you are my disciples." (Jn. 13: 34-35). When Christ encountered the rich young man, he "looked steadily at him and loved him." Our Lord not only respected and loved him, but he challenged him as well, "Come, follow me." (Mk. 10, 21). Taking their cue from the Master, adults prove their love by listening to youth, taking their opinions seriously, treating them with respect, sharing responsibility by involving them in the work of evangelisation, e.g. encouraging young people to be apostles to their own peers. Our era speaks so much of a "generation gap" and a "credibility gap". May not the community ask itself whether its own, sometimes negative or sometimes superior, attitudes do not alienate our youth; whether youth's lack of interest in religion is not due in part, perhaps a large part, to neglect by parents and pastors; whether youth is not more sinned against than sinning. Again, Christ sets the example. When the disciples turned the children away, Jesus was indignant. "Do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." (Mk. 10:13-14). On another occasion, when praising those who receive children kindly, *he* identified himself with them; "Anyone who welcomes a little child...like this in my name welcomes me". Then he added, "But anyone who is an obstacle and brings down one of these little ones who have faith in me would be drowned in the depths of the sea with a great millstone round his neck. Alas for the world that there would be such obstacles! Obstacles indeed there must be, but alas for the man who provides them!" (Mt. 18:5-7)".

### **‘How can we be more Effective in helping Youth?’**

22. If youth is to be what it is called to be and sent to be by God—the hope of our tomorrow, both of the Church and of India—youth needs a respectful, concerned guidance. What they need above all is a personal faith-commitment to Christ. In the past, the adult community often presumed that because a child was baptised in infancy, administered the other sacraments of initiation and was provided with Christian instruction, therefore he personally believed in Christ. This assumption can no longer be made. It is the

PJS-105

452

COMMUNITY HEALTH CELL

1st Floor, St. Joseph's Road,  
Pangalora, Mangalore

most fatal mistake in the pastoral care of children and youth. Basically, our young people hunger for a new and challenging experience. They have an insatiable thirst for a deep and satisfying experience which seems to be the Christ-experience that is ever elusive.

23. Has not the Church the greatest experience possible to share with its youth, the Christ-experience? The Church is sent to proclaim to youth, in terms that it can understand, the Good News: "the Kingdom of God has come!" What the Father has done through Jesus, with him, and in him, the Father wants to do in each of our youth: the Paschal Saving event. Give youth a deep, genuine Christ-experience, and it will be converted freely to proclaim that Jesus is the Lord. Christ alone will answer youth's deepest yearnings. Passing on from evangelisation to basic catechesis is the next step.

### **The Christian understanding of Life:**

24. A fuller understanding of the Gospels and a deeper commitment, is called for. In fact, the various themes that preoccupy youth—freedom, love, friendship, creativity, justice, social involvement, personality, sex, family life, liberation—must be the starting point in an updated Youth Catechesis through themes. For these are the subjects representing realities which both bewilder youth and attract it. As the *General Catechetical Directory* points out: "The principal task of catechesis in adolescence will be to further a genuinely Christian understanding of life. It must shed the light of the Christian message on the realities which have greater impact on the adolescent, such as the meaning of bodily existence, love and the family, the standards to be followed in life, work and leisure, justice and peace, and so on." (G.C.D. No. 84). If our catechesis is to prepare our young people for a life mission and witness in India, it must equip them to sift the variegated experiences that life brings to them and chart its difficult course with norms that are clear and unerring. This means a catechesis which searches for genuine values that are not just talked about, but lived.



## New techniques specially effective for Youth:

25. Given the bombardment of today's media with its contradictory messages, our youth must receive media education. This will teach them to discern the right values and be guided by a true Christian judgement. There are many new techniques like the discussion method, "cine-forum", shared prayer, bhajan and kirtan groups, summer camps, work camps, life-review, gospel enquiry, the "see-judge-act" method. An attractive catechesis will be imparted, using the media as the starting point. India's traditional cultural media offer a rich store of resource material. But no technique or aid, method or organization will replace the right attitude of the adult catechists towards youth and towards God. Paul VI spells out these "interior attitudes" in '*Evangelii Nuntiandi*' (Nos. 74-80). Only well-trained and committed catechists can animate youth in faith, prayer and generosity. Youth themselves must become the apostles of youth. "The Church counts greatly on their contribution, and we ourselves have often manifested our full confidence in them." ("*Evangelii Nuntiandi*", No. 72). The test of authentic youth-catechesis is that our youth become missionary themselves.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CELL  
326, V Main, I Block  
Koramangala  
Bangalore-560034  
India

## PART III: THE CONTEXT OF ALL CATECHESIS: TODAY'S INDIA

### **New Urban Challenges:**

26. Industrialised cities and townships pose new pastoral challenges for our Church. The working class in general is characterised by a life of insecurity, unemployment, exploitation and anonymity. It is harrassed by pseudo-politicians and money-lenders. The people suffering from such injustices are not served effectively by the normal ministry of the Church. Workers in new industrial centres, whose number is increasing every day, are by and large coming from traditional rural communities. They are scarcely prepared to meet the demoralizing influence of an industrial society. In these circumstances men become dehumanized. To industrial workers and their families the Church's institutions often appear rich and privileged.

### **The Changing Village Setting:**

27. To be sure, since independence, winds of change have been blowing in our villages: electrification, new roads, bridges, new means of transportation and communication—all bringing new opportunities to India's five hundred thousand villages. Nevertheless, many developmental projects—e.g. public health, education and improved agricultural methods—are also accompanied by problems and changes to which villagers cannot always adapt and from which they cannot profit. Another cause for concern is that the leaders and the educated class migrate from the villages to the cities, thus depriving their communities of leadership.

### **Bitter Realities:**

28. In our country today the number of those living on and under "the poverty line" is increasing steadily from 40% in 1960 to 60% in 1970. The number of those living in destitution is also increasing. There are tens of millions, for instance, living on less than one rupee a day. Degrading poverty deprives 360 million people in our country from necessary food, shelter, clothing, and education. We are also aware that the basic rights of man to work, without which



he cannot have dignity nor can he grow as a person, are denied him. We are aware that the number of unemployed is also soaring (between 1960 and 1970 the number rose from 16 to 36 million). Then there is the rapid increase of population (the decade between 1950 and 1960 had an increase of 78 million, and the decade between 1960 and 1970 saw an increase of 128 million). True, a too rapid increase in population hampers a harmonious economic growth, but is that the chief factor of our poverty? Will destitution be eradicated with control of population? How long will it take to control population? Will we permit 60 million children below the age of 6 to suffer from malnutrition until the population is brought under control? These are only some of the questions one could raise about our socio-economic situation. A catechesis which is Christian cannot ignore these realities or pass them over superficially with some shallow moralizing.

### **Rich Traditions and Discernment:**

29. The many rich cultures and religious traditions of our land provide solace amid crises and seasons of celebrations. Not enough attention and appreciation is paid to this rich heritage of Catechetics. However, it is also true that certain religious customs are not infrequently obstacles to progress, health and the growth of solid religion, because of superstitions and a fatalistic mentality which is fostered by them. Catechesis must help sift the good from the bad to uncover the '*semina verbi*' placed there by the Lord himself.

### **The Good Samaritan and India:**

30. Statistics, facts and figures for national and international poverty may indeed, seem unrealistic and remote from the lives of Church personnel. May the reason for this not be that our lives are sheltered and remote from harsh reality? Reflecting on the parable of the Good Samaritan, one cannot help taking stock of such a situation and seeing whether the coldness and indifference does not come from within when the message stands out clearly: "Every man is my brother." Pope Paul has repeatedly said: "Our deeds must match our words." Any genuine Catechesis must lead to mission and witness to transform our world.

### **Interdependence:**

31. To be sure, the Church in India must take responsibility for itself and its own progress. But just as this country was in the past colonially dependent, so our land today though politically free and sovereign, is interdependent upon other free nations economically, socially, culturally, and religiously. We live in one world. Our Catechetical apostolate and the Catholicity of our Church remind us of the need for international sharing, to forge a just world and a loving world in which "Everyman is my brother" is not just an empty phrase.

## **PART IV: THE CONTENT AND APPROACH OF CATECHESIS:**

### **Faithful to Christ's and the Church's full proclamation:**

32. From our pastoral experience we know that all evangelisation must lead to catechesis, just as a new born faith must grow to maturity. So too, every real catechesis must evangelise, that is it must lead to a change of heart. The basic message of this ministry, its central content, is the *Christ-event*. Christ is the great revelation, the "radiant light of God's glory" (I Heb. 1:3), the person of Jesus in his totality, fully man and fully God. He is our message. His saving words and deeds reach their climax in the Paschal Exodus—His ministry, passion, death, resurrection and return to the Father and his coming in glory. By this great mystery of the Father's love, Jesus the Lord, alive and active, abides with us forever. Today and throughout history his spirit witnesses in power to him, transforming us, inviting, challenging, purifying always. The sacred sciences—Scripture, Liturgy, Doctrine, along with Christian witness—are at the service of Catechesis, which is faith-formation of the individual within the community.



## A Content Faithful to Man:

33. To meet the challenge of people continually drifting away from the Church, there has been a tremendous effort from the beginning of this century to re-think the apostolate of catechesis: its pedagogy and content... and to adapt it to the needs and existential situation of the people. And yet, the "leakage" from the Church continues and the work of catechizing is becoming increasingly difficult. This situation is seen also in India today. The Church seems to have lost some of its credibility especially in cities and industrialized areas. Religion "classes" bore our students, particularly when little or no efforts are made to make them relevant and interesting. Attendance at Sunday Mass and the frequenting of the Sacraments is on the decrease. If we are serious about making catechesis relevant to the lives of our people and helping them experience, deepen and live their faith, we will have to identify what has gone wrong not only with our approach and methods but ask whether, in our zest to catechize, we have not side-tracked the imperatives of the mission and the message of Jesus. Thus we need first of all to clarify this mission and the message, and then relate it to the concrete situations in which we live.

34. The content of our proclamation is not just past history. The Church tells us that Catechetics teaches "the faithful to give a Christian interpretation to human events, especially to the signs of the times, so that all will be able to test and interpret all things in a wholly Christian spirit." (G.C.D., No. 26).

35. This faith-discernment of life-events draws not only on the divine revelation and sacred sciences, but also on the behavioural sciences, particularly *psychology*, *sociology* and *anthropology*. It is by this reflection, helped by grace, that Christ "fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling, clear." "Such is the mystery of man, and it is a great one, as seen by believers in the light of Christian Revelation. Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from

His Gospel they overwhelm us. Christ has risen, destroying death by His death. He has lavished life upon us so that, as sons in the Son, we cry out in the Spirit: Abba, Father" (Constitution on *"The Church in the Modern World,"* No. 22).

### **Our Approach: The Incarnation**

36. Modern catechetical approach, then, starts with man as he is, where he is, and helps him in the light of Christ to discover his sonship. The content of this approach is the total life-situation here and now as interpreted in faith by Christ's and the Church's own full teaching and experience. This is the reason why in Vatican II, Catechetics starts with man in his situation and then moves interiorly to discover Christ. This is a life-long search and it reaches its goal in the Trinity, as the source of all life and meaning. Every authentic catechesis is a saving event, a renewal of the Incarnation. Catechesis does not remain satisfied with a "happening", however authentic. It moves forward to promote in each believer "maturity in Christ", so that he becomes as adult, a responsible Christian, a living witness and apostle of India.

### **Christ's Mission to Liberate and Unite:**

37. This vision is no other than the vision of man as unfolded to us in the person of Jesus: He lived intensely in communion with his fellowmen. He manifested in Himself the power and caring love of the Father for freeing man from uncertainty, insecurity and fear, and the consequences of his selfishness and alienation from his fellowmen and from God Himself. He strove to unite man into one family of love, respect and concern as children of the one Father, God. "I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly."

38. Such a vision demands the re-structuring of human relationships at every level of existence: socio-economic,



political, religious and cultural. It demands that every man has a right to existence, to respect, to conditions allowing him to grow as a human being and as a Son of God. It also demands that the necessary duty of every disciple of Jesus is to use all his powers to defend the dignity and rights of others, to contribute in improving conditions for man's growth, and to establish more and more just human relationships: "The servant is not greater than his master" (Jn. 13: 16). "Greater love than this no man has than that he lays down his life for his friend." (Jn. 15: 13). "So long as you did it to one of these my least ones, you did it to me". (Mt 25: 40).

39. Catechesis, therefore, is a faith-reflection on the actual multi-dimensional relationship among men and their existential situation of anxiety and hope, suffering and joy. (Vat. II, *"The Church in the Modern World,"* No. 1). Hence, its point of departure must be these very realities.

## PART V: THE FORMATION (TRAINING) OF THE CATECHIST:

40. "Renewal in general implies people transformed in spirit and vision, mentality and attitudes, relationship and values. Catechetical Renewal calls for—above all, in a diocese—a team of competent and renewed people who have undergone a process of conversion, who have a professional and technical training in modern Catechetics and who have the benefit of actual practical experience in catechising." (D. S. Amalorpavadass, III AICM p. 62).

### The on-going Conversion of the Catechist:

41. The most important factor is the Christ-experience of the catechist himself. Unless and until the catechist is open to an ever-deeper experience of the Risen Lord, he will not be able to communicate it to those to whom he is sent. As in the Early Church, the catechist must be like the apostles who "continue to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power." (Acts IV, 33).

42. "The catechist can no more catechise by lecturing to his audience from the outside in an uncommitted way. He has to be within, and hence must belong to a human group. He has to be fully and solidly with his group and live all the events and aspects of life including tensions and conflicts, in a committed way. He has first of all, as was said earlier, to discover God in his life and interpret for himself the designs of God in his life, environment and community. Then only can he share with others from within what he has discovered by his observation and involvement, by his listening to God's Word and meditating on it. Without this self-evangelisation, personal meditation, assimilation, interiorisation and discovery and without a personal relationship with God and the consequent conversion and transformation, a catechist cannot fulfil his prophetic function." (D. S. A. AICM 1973 p. 67).



43. If the catechist can undertake "the personal task of assimilating and passing judgement on the concrete circumstances" (G.C.D. No. 71), he will be able to relate the signs of everyday experience to the Gospel message. "Any pastoral activities for the carrying out of which there are not at hand persons with the right formation and preparation, will necessarily come to nothing" (G.C.D., No. 108)

44. This formation is only complete when the Catechist becomes competent to select the most suitable method for communicating the Gospel message to groups and individuals who live in circumstances always different and singular.

### **Renewal of Seminaries:**

45. A thorough re-orientation is therefore called for in all seminaries and houses of formation. Catechesis should no longer be considered as a purely academic subject, but sufficient practical orientation and field-work or class-room practice should be provided in the seminary time-table for the seminarians' training in the essential task of a Minister of the Word.

### **Training for all Catechists:**

46. "This formation is meant for all catechists, both lay and religious, and also for christian parents, who will be able to receive therefrom effective help for taking care of the initial and occasional catechesis for which they are responsible. This formation is meant for deacons, and especially for priests, for by the power of the sacrament of Orders, and in the image of the Eternal High Priest they are consecrated to preach the Gospel, shepherd the faithful, and celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament. Indeed, in individual parishes the preaching of the word of God is committed chiefly to the priests, who are obliged to open the riches of Sacred Scripture to the faithful and to explain the mysteries of the faith and the norms

452

PJ 5-105

of Christian living in homilies throughout the course of the liturgical year. Hence it is of great importance that a thorough catechetical preparation be given to students in seminaries and scholasticates, which should be completed afterwards by the continuing formation mentioned above". (G.C.D., No. 115).

47. An important aspect of the catechist's training programme is the training of lay leaders and lay catechists. If catechesis is the responsibility of the whole Church, and if the entire Church is missionary, then "all missionaries—priests, brothers, sisters, and laymen—each according to his own state, need preparation and training if they are not to be found unequal to the demands of the future work." (Vat. II, "*Decree on Missionary Activity*," No. 26).

### **Incarnation into the Mission Area:**

48. This kind of preparation ('inculturation') is a requirement whereby the catechists will gain a general knowledge "of people's cultures and religion—a knowledge that looks not only to the past but to the present as well". (Vat. II, "*Decree on Missionary Activity*", No. 26). It calls for a total incarnation of the catechist into the world of his mission, prompting him to "empty himself" and make himself incarnate in the language, the culture and the customs of his adopted people. Should the catechist fail to make this initial plunge, his catechesis will not ring true and sincere.

49. The Church never finishes her work of missionary formation. "She is always preparing new generations of apostles... The Synod (has said)...that the missionary proclamation never ceases, and that the Church will always be striving for the fulfilment of this proclamation." (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*," No. 53).



## CONCLUSION:

50. At the very outset we emphasized the central role played by the faith-community in the catechetical effort to communicate the christian life and message. The community is the agent in this handing over of the faith from christian to christian, sharing the experience of the Risen Lord and implanting within the heart of every new catechumen the mustard seed that will blossom into a mighty tree, relaying the faith, and the gifts of the Spirit.

51. This faith-community, the Church in miniature, is the place from where the Gospel radiates. All its members evangelize and are evangelized. Such a community becomes the evangelizer of other communities in the neighbourhood, until the saving Word is echoed from person to person, from Community to Community influenced by the action of the Holy Spirit.

52. As the Holy Father tells us: "May the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world". (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*", No. 80).

53. Our preparations for this Synod have not been ideal. Still, despite all the shortcomings, we believe that as a community we have, by God's grace, listened to His Spirit. With Mary we have treasured his saving events and pondered them in our hearts. In doing so, we have celebrated a festival of joy and brotherhood in the breaking of the bread and prayer. We pray now that by giving us an ever deeper understanding of our ministry of the WORD-MADE-FLESH, Christ's Spirit may bring our faith to completion by His gifts. May we redouble our efforts to prepare for the coming of the Lord in our midst.

"Maranatha," Come Lord Jesus!

# COMMUNITY HEALTH CELL

326, V Main, I Block

Koramangala

Bangalore-56 0034

India





